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ABSTRACT

Curriculum research is reviewed. In Part 1, a survey is reported that was designed to: (1) acquire information on action research projects in Ireland (North and South), the United Kingdom, and the United States; (2) determine the principal method of data collection; (3) identify the rank-order priority of constraints on research; (4) classify studies as practical, scientific, or critical; (5) identify reasons for action research; and (6) identify influential action researchers and exemplars. The following factors were identified and rank-ordered as constraints on action research: time to do research; lack of resources; problems in school organization; acquiring skills and knowledge to conduct research; division of labor in curriculum research; and the language of educational research. In Part 2, aspects of the three-nation action research project are discussed, focusing on models of action research labeled scientific, collaborative, and critical conceptions. It is argued that educational institutions and publishers have tended to constrain the development of an international conception of educational action research. Contains 28 references. (KM)

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VARIETIES OF CURRICULUM ACTION RESEARCH: CONSTRAINTS AND TYPOLOGIES IN ANGLO-IRISH AND AMERICAN PROJECTS

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VARIETIES OF CURRICULUM ACTION RESEARCH: CONSTRAINTS AND TYPOLOGIES IN ANGLO-IRISH AND AMERICAN PROJECTS

Jim McKernan
University College Dublin

Introduction

> Lord we aint what we got to be,
> we aint what we want to be, we aint what
> we are going to be; but thank God,
> we aint what we used to be._
>
> Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I have chosen to open my paper with these words by the great black American emancipator because action research, like King's ideas, is concerned with freedom, autonomy and emancipation while professing to change the quality of life in social settings-and whilst ideal end-states may not be reached those of us who have been exposed to "planned enactment" (McKernan, 1990) know that the persons and problems involved in situ will never be the same again. Action research is akin to a small scale civil rights movement of the kind led by the Rev.King, but it is still very much a protest or parade, rather than a paradigm. Action research is expressed in proposals involving practitioners as change agents in pursuit of the betterment of schools emerging out of a reconceptualized mode of curriculum research. I say movement with reservation because looking around this conference I have not met many teachers, let alone black activists of curriculum change. It seems to me, sitting in my island retreat of Ireland that curriculum research is full of ungovernable men with some degree of contempt for existing models-an anarchy of the curriculum mind which forbids a unity of truth.

My paper is in two parts. Part I discloses the results of a survey of constraints acknowledged to be barriers in the action research process as identified by forty curriculum action research project leaders in the USA, United Kingdom and Ireland. These are: time to do research, lack of resources, problems in school organization, problems of acquiring skills and knowledge to conduct research activity; division of labour in curriculum research and the language of educational research. The purpose of the survey being to gain a clearer understanding and awareness of the rank order importance of twelve often cited constraints on inquiry as well as to report the intricacies of forty action research projects in the USA, United Kingdom and Ireland.

In Part II I have concentrated on discussing aspects of the three nation action research project survey-focussing on "varieties" or models of action research which I have labelled elsewhere (McKernan, 1988a; 1988b) as scientific, collaborative, and critical conceptions. I think this is by far the more interesting part of the paper since it lets us in on that murky terrain of the epistemology of practice, and serves to offer empirical evidence for what I have termed the "transcontinental curriculum ideological divide" an hypothesis which argues that educational institutions and publishers have tended to conspire, to in fact constrain, the development of an international conception, or mutual -inclusive notion of educational action research. That is, we do not look across the water for understanding but to our own advocates at home. There is little reciprocal knowledge and consensual philosophical understanding of what counts as action research in the three nations.

Indeed this paper may have been subtitled "Anglo-Irish and American case reports of educational action research" where what is offered are authenticated accounts and perspectives from those engaged in action research work in education.

Constraints are barriers to success. McKernan (1982) and Rowntree (1981:10-11) argue that constraints are factors that may prevent one from taking action one would prefer. Given that the curriculum will be impeded in its goal achievement by a host of external and internal factors, one must regard constraints as obstacles which must be dealt with, got around, overcome in some fashion or manner of tactical procedure. Serious efforts at curriculum development ought to begin with an analysis of these barriers to success, as opposed to say, the identification of aims and objectives. It is only logical and correct to proceed by acknowledging the barriers one faces from the outset. Indeed Carr and Kemmis (1986) in their sophisticated intellectual treatment of action research argue that action research is at base an attempt to identify and eradicate the constraints which thwart rational action and the achievement of autonomy and emancipation.

As Barry MacDonald and Jean Rudduck (1971) have pointed out, the education system is a "given" and any attempts at change must be studied and taken account of up front by the improvement team. Moreover, this is a task for local groups. Improvement must be sensitive to the diversity of settings, situations, actors, and their idiosyncracies and needs. Each development unit, or team must conduct decentralized action research

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CONSTRAINTS ON THE PRACTITIONER AS ACTION RESEARCHER

The purpose of this section is to examine specifically a number of constraints that function to impede the teacher-researcher role or the effectiveness of an action research stance. That teachers should enjoy a research role is not universally accepted, yet Phenix (1964) has commented that man is infinitely concerned with a search for structure and ordered meaning. For teachers to be frustrated in their search for meaning and accountability is totally unacceptable. Teaching, argued Schaefer, in his beautifully crafted John Dewey lecture, more than any of the professions, "ought to permit and to encourage the pursuit of meaning beyond any current capacity to comprehend". Yet Schaefer noticed that "teachers have not been freed to study their craft rigorously and dispassionately." (Schaefer, 1967:59).

Research-Based Practice

Schools need to be self-conscious and reflective about their work. Teachers and administrators as public servants, are culpable and accountable for their actions. The teacher as action researcher movement is not a recent phenomenon (Dewey, 1929; ASCD; 1957; Wann, 1950; 1952). Yet I do not wish to work through the ethics of the accountability arguments here-simply to open up the discussion in the direction of establishing a case for research based teaching and identyfying major obstacles to the implementation of teacher-action-researcher work.

Given my initial definition of the curriculum as a hypothesis, an

educational idea or proposal that invites a critical response, then the work of teachers and administrators becomes something akin to an experiment-an inquiry into the effects of practice. Professionals operating a research based mode of teaching will open up their students to the possibility of understanding the nature of inquiry and reflective problem-solving as a lifeskill. But what are the obstacles in employing a research stance towards one practice?

INTERNATIONAL (AMERICAN & ANGLO-IRISH) SURVEY OF CONSTRAINTS ON CURRICULUM ACTION RESEARCH

This section seeks to describe the results of an international survey of the constraints on those involved in the conduct of curriculum action research. More specifically, the inquiry sought to examine the relative importance of various teacher, school and community constraints, or barriers, which impeded teachers, adminsitrators and other practitioners from doing action research on educational problems. For the purposes of explaining the study to the respondents, action research was defined as:

> Action research is defined as inquiry or research by practitioners to understand, and/or solve, pressing practical curriculum problems to improve the quality of action in the curricular setting.

Objectives of the Anglo-Irish/American Survey

The study sought to :

1. Gain brief details of the type of projects being undertaken.
2. To determine the principal methodology of data collection used by action researchers.
3. Identify rank order priority of constraints on research.
4. Classify studies as practical, scientific or critical action research.
5. Identify reasons and motivations for conducting action research
6. To identify influential action research writers and exemplars.

The Procedure

The study was carried out during the Winter and Spring of 1988-89 and was focussed upon action research in the USA, U.K., and Ireland (North and South) . A self-report case questionnaire was the primary instrument of

data collection. A list of twelve barriers which act to constrain research activity were identified through: firstly a review of literature on action research and more informally in face to face discussion with action researchers. (See Table 1)

Research Population

Institutions and individuals who had been known to engage in teacher as researcher and action research work were directly contacted as asked to participate in the study[1]. In the U.K., Professor John Elliott[2] provided linkage with CARN, the Classroom Action Research Network; in addition, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and local educational authority personnel were helpful. In all eight (n=8) completed case instruments were processed for the U.K. In the United States, 24 case reports were returned. In Northern Ireland 8 case reports were returned for analysis.

In all, 40 completed instruments were returned from the those sent out (USA N=24; UK/Ireland=16). However, there was no representative sampling design built into the study. It was purely exploratory and the small percentage of respondents does not detract from the validity or reliability of the findings.

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1. I am grateful to the following for support with facilitating responses: In the U.K. and Northern Ireland, Professor John Elliott of the University of East Anglia and the Classroom Action Research Network; In the USA Professor Susan Florio-Ruane of Michigan State University and Dr Margaret Wilsman of the Wisconsin Public Radio and Television Network organized small bands of action researchers to return data.

2. Conveniently, as it happened, Professor Elliott was spending a sabbatical term at University College Dublin working closely with the author.

RESULTS

The major findings relating to the ranking of constraints on action research are set out in Table 1 The table indicates that the four major constraints, as seen by researchers in the practical setting, are:

Table 1 About Here

1. LACK OF TIME TO DO RESEARCH
2. LACK OF RESOURCES
3. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION,(for example, problems of timetable).
4. LACK OF RESEARCH SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE.

These results were highly predicted by the literature. Stenhouse (1981:111) suggested that "the most serious impediment to the development of teachers as researchers-and indeed as artists in teaching-is quite simply shortage of time. In this country teachers teach too much."

The second most important obstacle was lack of resources. Research costs in human terms and hardware as well as in monetary expense. (One reason why more folk did not return this questionnaire was that the writer did not enclose stamped envelopes). Equipment such as tape recorders, video machines, even questionnaires require funding-often the first victims of the new Thatcher-Bush free-market economics.

Third most important was seen to be the organisation of the school. This may be interpreted to mean that under present organizational structuires

teachers either do not have time to do this because of the lockstep character of teacher-pupil contact, or that the curriculum organization does not permit slots for "research work". One of the more sensible arrangements which I have been made aware of is that operating in a London Comprehensive High School where one member of staff was designated as the school "Teacher-Researcher" with the exciting, though demanding task of teaching half time and devoting half time to supporting other teacher's action research work within the school. Thus, alternative organizational/time structures need to be considered for the action research paradigm to make significant impact. the new Centres for Applied Research in Education (e.g. East Anglia, Louisville, George Mason, Minnesota, seem to be addressing these problems successfully).

The fourth most significant barrier identified by respondents was <u>lack of research skills and knowledge</u>. This was seen by Stephen Corey, (Corey, 1954) as the most important factor in the action research equation:

> "There is considerable reason for believing that research methodology will not begin to have the influence on American education that it might have until thousands of teachers, administrators, supervisors and school patrons make more frequent use of the methods of science as they cope with their own practical problems. In the last analysis, action research in education is no more than attempting to solve practical school problems by using <u>research methods</u>."

(Corey: 1954:380)

Middle-Range Constraints

Factors identified having a medium effect were:

5. OBTAINING CONSENT TO DO RESEARCH
6. LANGUAGE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
7. STUDENT EXAMINATIONS
8. DISAPPROVAL OF PRINCIPAL.

One of the immediate results was the finding that language of educational research was only 6th in importance. This was predicted to be a major barrier for practitioners, and seems a surprising result since most practitioners comment at one time or another on the difficulty of (quantitative) educational research terms and language.

However, the middle range constraints are taken up almost exclusively by School Factors e.g. consent to do research, student's examinations, and the wrath of the principal. Two of the above refer to the issues involved in carefully negotiating a research study for access (Kemmis, et al; 1988) the issue of examinations has to do with the whiplash effects on teachers' having to teach for the exam and the syllabus and therefore having little time to deal with formative research evaluation.

Least Important Constraints

Least important barriers to doing research are Collegial & Professional

9. DISAPPROVAL OF FELLOW TEACHERS/COLLEAGUES
10. PERSONAL BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER
11. PROFESSIONAL FACTORS:UNION CONTRACT,POLICY ETC
12. DISAPPROVAL OF STUDENTS

One of the most significant findings is that the practitioners believed that personal beliefs about teacher's role was not a major barrier-that is, that teachers do expect to do research and that their charge is not only to instruct. This may signal a professional teacher development work ethic among respondents. Significantly several "collegial factors" are combined as the least important constraints. That is, teachers and other respondents did not see pupils, fellow teachers and colleagues or their professional contract as very important barriers to doing research. It would appear that these areas are safe and secure with a foundation for inquiry in place.

Table 1

Ranking of Constraints On Action Research: Means and Composite Rank Order Variables For American, British and Irish Action Research Officers

	N=All:40		USA=24		UK=8		N.I.=8	
	$\bar{X}$	Rnk	$\bar{X}$	Rnk	$\bar{X}$	Rnk	$\bar{X}$	Rnk
OBTAIN CONSENT-SUPPORT TO RESEARCH PROBLEMS	5.77	(5)	6.40	(5)	4.20	(4)	5.00	(4)
DISAPPROVAL OF PRINCIPAL	7.08	(8)	7.68	(8)	4.50	(5)	6.75	(6)
DISAPPROVAL OF FELLOW TEACHERS-COLLEAGUES	7.54	(9)	8.22	(10)	7.00	(10)	5.71	(5)
DISAPPROVAL OF STUDENTS	8.87	(12)	8.71	(12)	9.00	(11)	9.28	(12)
STUDENTS' EXAMINATIONS	6.96	(7)	7.05	(7)	6.66	(8)	6.85	(7)
PERSONAL BELIEFS GOVERNING ROLE OF TEACHER (DIVISION OF LABOUR FACTOR)	8.38	(10)	8.68	(11)	6.60	(7)	8.71	(10)
LACK OF RESOURCES (EQUIPMENT-FINANCES)	3.61	(2)	3.50	(2)	3.16	(2)	3.33	(2)
PERSONAL LACK OF RESEARCH SKILLS -RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE	5.68	(4)	5.00	(4)	6.25	(6)	7.83	(9)
SCHOOL ORGANIZATION (TIMETABLING ETC)	4.06	(3)	3.54	(3)	4.00	(3)	3.62	(3)
LACK OF TIME FOR RESEARCH	1.86	(1)	1.95	(1)	1.42	(1)	2.00	(1)
LANGUAGE OF RESEARCH	6.74	(6)	6.47	(6)	6.68	(9)	7.57	(8)
PROFESSIONAL CONSTRAINTS (CONTRACT-UNION POLICY,ETC)	8.55	(11)	8.15	(9)	10.0	(12)	8.83	(11)

Figures shown are the Mean ($\bar{X}$); in parentheses is the Composite Rank Order.

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TYPOLOGIES OF ACTION RESEARCH

Definitions of action research will not solve curriculum problems but they may help in providing spectacles for understanding broad patterns which underlie the epistemology of action inquiry. The inquiry sought data which might help to throw light on the "styles" or "conceptions"[3] of curriculum action research. Elsewhere (McKernan, 1988a; 1989) I have argued that action research can be classified as "traditional-scientific" when conducted in the scientific quantitative style (Lewin, 1947; Corey, 1953) and more recently in the tradition of measurement minded educationists like Borg (1981) in the USA, and Gregory (1988) in the U.K.; secondly, as interactive-collaborative "practical" when employed as a moral-practical concern such as in the spirit of CARN or John Elliott and his colleagues (Elliott and Adelman, 1973; Elliott and Ebbutt, 1985; Elliott, 1987) allied with some of those in the teacher-researcher movement (Hustler, et al, 1986; Hopkins, 1985; Nixon, 1981; Walker, 1985); or, as "critical" when used in the sense of emancipataory understanding (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis et al, 1988; Winter, 1987).

Project Leader's Characterization of Project Orientation

The penultimate survey question requested project leaders to classify their project as either "Scientific" "Practical" or "Critical" in terms of its rationale-purpose etc. Such a question is crucial in terms of

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3. I prefer not to use the in vogue and much-maligned concept of "paradigm" because I feel we do not have anything like strict paradigms in a Kuhnian sense in curriculum studies.

understanding what action researchers believe, or at least think, they are doing. Some critics will argue that a "Scientific" orientation is a nonsense in action research-but this is not correct as Borg (1981) and Borg and Gall (1979) argue for just such a conception based upon experimental research techniques-indeed, Corey (1953) advocated scientific research methods applied to educational problems.

These findings may help us, even in spite of the small numbers, to understand the general rationale-beliefs about action research in the countries studied. Firstly, the overwhelming majority in both the USA and UK believe that action research is a practical concern-best disclosing the character of the project in which they are engaged. In the USA 70 per cent of the respondents (N=17) suggested that a "practical" conception best characterized what they are doing. The practical view has been much argued and supported by leading UK action researchers (Elliott, 1987; Elliott, 1988; Elliott and Ebbutt, 1985) and some two thirds favoured this there. In Ireland, the concerns shift toward an emancipatory mode-no doubt fuelled by the almost civil war like atmosphere in Northern Ireland where most of these projects are based. Action researchers there argue strongly for a social reconstructionist curriculum stance.

Table 2

Project Leader's Conception-Orientation of Action Research

	USA N=24	UK N=8	IRE. N=8
SCIENTIFIC	(2) 8%	(-)	(-)
PRACTICAL	(17) 70%	(5) 62%	(2) 25%
CRITICAL	(5) 22%	(3) 38%	(6) 75%

Methodology-Data Collection Techniques Used in the Projects

One of the chief goals of the study was to unearth data related to the conduct of action research-in particular: "How do action researchers collect evidence and gain feedback in the practical setting"? Table 3 sets out these data.

The results of the survey of research methods used in the three nation-40 project study are interesting. In the USA 24 projects were surveyed using some 43 cited techniques. The dominant techniques used were quantitative including questionnaires /surveys (N=8) followed by teacher made tests (N=6). This may reflect the ideological preference for American researchers to work within the survey-quantitative educational research tradition-even when doing action research (Borg and Gall, 1979) Also employed was the method of direct observation (N=5) and the more qualitative oriented teacher diaries (N=4); interviews (N=4) and field notes (N=4).

In the United Kingdom projects seem to "triangulate" their methods and are methodologically more complex with some 25 methods cited for the 8 projects. Top of the UK list are interviews (N=5) and direct observation (N=3)

For the Irish some 19 methods were associated with 8 projects. The most commonly used technique was the questionnaire (N=5)
followed by the interview (N=3).

Table 3
DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES USED IN THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS

	USA	UK	IRELAND
No. Projects	24	8	8
QUESTIONNAIRES	8	3	5
INTERVIEWS	4	5	3
JOURNAL-DIARY*	4	2	1
TEACHER TESTS	6	1	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	2	-	-
MINI-CONFERENCE	1	1	-
CHECKLIST	1	-	-
DIRECT OBSERVATION	5	4	3
CASE STUDY	2	1	1
RECORDS-DOCUMENTS	1	-	-
AUDIO-TAPE	1	2	1
FIELD NOTES	4	2	1
PUPIL WORK SAMPLES	3	-	-
TEACHER SELF-REPORTS	-	-	1
PHOTOGRAPHS	-	1	-
VIDEO TAPE	1	2	1
EXTERNAL OBSERVER	-	1	1
TOTAL METHODS	43	25	19

*Pupil, teacher and parent diaries were mentioned.

Major Benefits - Reason for Doing Action Research

Table 4 sets out the results of qualitative commentaries offered in response to the question: "What is the major reason for doing action research"?

The three most important reasons offered were:

1. To improve professional practice-performance
2. To develop practical knowledge
3. To develop understanding and reflection.

In the USA 10 of the 24 project leaders cited "improve practice" as the major reason. In Ireland 5 of the 8 offered "improve practice".

In both the USA and Ireland one project leader suggested unashamedly that the purpose of the exercise was "to get a higher degree". When asked why he did it-one British practitioner remarked cryptically "because it works"

It is also useful to observe that some engage in action research in order to develop second order research facilitation roles-to help others develop professionally.

Table 4 Major Reasons For Doing Action Research

	USA N=24	UK N=8	Ireland N=8
Improve My Practice	10	2	5
Develop Knowledge	4	2	-
Solve Practical Problems	2	-	-
Develop Understanding	4	2	-
Emancipation	1	1	-
Develop Research Skills	1	-	-
Obtain Qualification	2	-	1
Facilitate Others	-	1	1
Evaluate Innovations	-	-	1

Ideological Base-camp: Who do the action researchers read?

A final question of some interest to the researcher was linked to the belief that working philosophies of action research and curriculum in general are largely determined by what books and authors the practitioner reads or even has a personal acquaintance with. Moreover, I suspect that there is a "Transcontinental Curriculum Ideological Divide"-a broad cultural mountain which restricts and impedes the access to reciprocal knowledge and ideas in operation. I further feel that this situation is largely perpetuated by higher education insitutions and educational publishers-that is, we in Ireland have some access to the British tradition of curriculum making and literature but I feel that Americans are not well-read in European literature on these topics.[4] The situation is, of course, reciprocal, which table 6 shows.

The Americans do not read the Anglo-Australians. The most popular US authors were Nancy Atwell (N=4) and Don Groves (N=3). The only authors known and/or read in all three nations were John Elliott, Lawrence Stenhouse, and Stephen Kemmis. It is not an accident that all three were at one time associated with the University of East Anglia, Norwich whose Centre for Applied Research in Education has done much to promote the action research idea internationally.

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4. While on a sabbatical year in 1985-at the Universities of Harvard and Pennsylvania I was hard pressed to obtain copies of British educational writers in two of the best academic libraries in America. In my search for Stenhouse's classic book An Introduction To Curriculum Research and Development I had to avail of overseas lending library arrangements.

Table 5 AUTHORS CITED AS USEFUL/INFLUENTIAL TO PROJECT LEADER

	USA (N=24)	UK (N=8)	IRE (N=8)
		USA AUTHORS	
Nancy Atwell	4	-	-
Don Groves	3	-	-
Gene Stanford	1	-	-
Novak-Gowin	1	-	-
Joanne Simmons	2	-	-
Don Murray	1	-	-
Lucy Caulkins	1	-	-
Ken Rubin	1	-	-
Anthony Pellegrini	1	-	-
Don Hoekstra	1	-	-
Good-Brophy	1	-	-
R. Purnell	1	-	-
D. Greer	1	-	-
Dixie Goswamii	1	-	-
Ann Liberman	1	-	-
James Britton	1	-	-
James Moffett	1	-	-
Peter Elbow	1	-	-
Lou Vygotsky	1	-	-
J. Heath	1	-	-
Don Schon	1	-	-
Ken McCrory	2	-	-
		U.K. AUTHORS	
John Elliott	1	4	4
Lawrence Stenhouse	1	3	2
Wilfred Carr	-	-	1
Jim McKernan	-	-	2
Cohen-Manion	-	-	2
Barry McDonald	-	-	1
Denis Lawton	-	-	1
David Hopkins	1	1	-
Robert Burgess	-	1	-
Open University	-	2	-
C.A.R.N.*	-	1	-
Hammersley-Atkinson	-	1	-
Rob Walker	-	1	1
Helen Simons	-	-	1
E.A.R.N.I.	-	-	1
Jon Nixon	-	-	1
		AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS	
Stephen Kemmis	1	2	2
Colin Hook	-	-	1
Ray McTaggart	1	-	1

Numbers exceed projects as resondents cited a range of authors.

Conclusions

Action research was conceived by social and behavioural scientists. We should bear in mind that this represents only one approach which may be adopted and that alternative perspectives are not only available, but eminently desirable for a flourishing action research movement. There is some evidence that the new "teacher-researcher" movement is going some way towards the provision of this new form of curriculum inquiry.

Major barriers to be overcome on the path to liberation include time to do research work, lack of resources such as equipment, school organization issues (such as timetabling) and fourthy, lack of research skills and knowledge to conduct curiculum research. Serious attempts at inservice and collaborative facilitation in future must take account of these problems-preferably in this order of importance.

Schools will serve as centers for curriculum inquiry to the extent that they achieve a true understanding of the nature of their curriculum problems and foster the ideals of emancipation, participation and reflection on practice. The key values here are: freedom, autonomy, equality, democracy and professionalism. We know what the virtues are. Now we have to act.

The tasks of teacher research are onerous. The present situation would seem to suggest that a strengthened school-college partnership should be undertaken in which collaboration may be started. I have tended to focus on the mind of the action researcher, or the individual in the research

process-note that I have not taken into account institutional and political issues governing the success or failure of the action research perspective. The political dimension is crucial and it is fundamentally true to note that all researchers require support but it is also for the reason of not letting third level institutions become too far detached from the real rough and tumble world of curriculum reality that such a partnership is essential.

Three prescriptive suggestions. School practitioners need time and resources to engage in practitioner research. Can ways and means be found to re-direct current expenditure on educational research, particularly at school district level, to allow for support in addressing these major constraints so that curriculum may be improved at local levels? Second, action research writers, particularly second-order university facilitators, need to have ongoing involvement in action research projects if they are to be credible speakers-the gap between meta-theory and practical theory is too large. They must get their feet wet with the water of practice. Finally, may I suggest that action research writers make a sustained effort to publish their work "away from home"-that is, that British and Australians use the North American outlets and vice versa to overcome the transcontinental curriculum divide.

Just as in King's America of 1964 something akin to a cultural revolution is taking place in our practice and research of the curriculum. If this means working with the practical-scientific and critical then it may mean progress and the sort of oxygen required to revive what Tom Paulin, the

Ulster poet has referred to as the "cadaver-politic". If a solution is a political mirage then we must begin to pay attention to irrigating our educational and social deserts. It seems to me that our history of curriculum inquiry contains depressing culs de sac as well as hopeful curricular trails and re-births and that is what I have tried to indicate here-finally the re-awakened interest in action research may lead to the birth of a new curriculum mind invoking Yeat's[5] immortal words that with the birth of the new independent Irish nation "a terrible beauty is born".

Action Research is concerned ultimately with freedom and emancipation as Lawrence Stenhouse argued (Stenhouse, 1983) and being so I think I'll leave the last word to a fellow countryman William Butler Yeats

> Out of Ireland have we come,
> Great hatred, little room,
> Maimed us at the start.
>
> William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

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5. See William Butler Yeats, (1869-1939) . His poem Easter 1916.

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